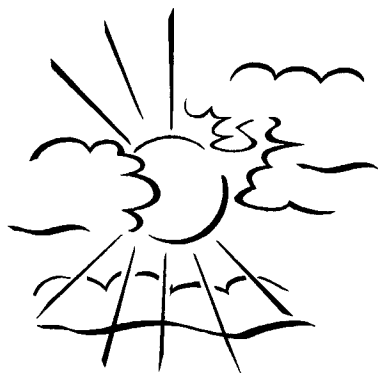


***Department  
of  
Human  
Services***

Prepared by the  
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Communications  
(517) 373-7394



\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Thursday, October 27, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Oct 27, 11:14 AM EDT

## **Michigan senator wants to tie health insurance to behavior**

By DAVID EGGERT  
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Insurance companies and HMOs in Michigan would be required to offer financial incentives that reward people for healthy behavior under legislation introduced Thursday in the state Senate.

Sen. Tom George, a Portage Republican and practicing physician, said the state is facing a public health crisis steeped in poor dieting, smoking and a lack of exercise. State law currently bars health insurance companies from offering incentives for good behavior - unlike life, auto and home insurers.

"Individuals who exercise, refrain from smoking and are compliant with treatment should see a benefit in their pocketbook," George said.

He said the legislation is aimed at helping smaller businesses that aren't big enough to self-insure. Self-insured companies have more freedom to create incentive programs for their workers, though it's unclear how many are doing so.

Businesses would not be required to buy insurance that rewards healthy living, George said. Altarum, an Ann Arbor-based nonprofit research institute, released a 2004 study showing Michigan with high rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and smoking compared with other states.

George also is an architect of a new plan requiring Medicaid recipients to sign an agreement pledging to follow healthy lifestyles. He wants to charge Medicaid patients less for services if they exercise regularly and don't smoke. But his proposal stalled in budget negotiations, and lawmakers are continuing to study the idea.

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The healthy behavior bills are Senate Bills 848-49.

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On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

# Medicare drug plan causing some confusion

By Ryan Bentley Petoskey News-Review Staff Writer

*Wednesday, October 26, 2005 3:41 PM EDT*

As a specialist in elder law, Petoskey attorney John Ternes has encountered numerous older adults who incur substantial bills each month for the prescriptions they need.

Ternes believes the soon-to-be-available prescription benefits which the federal government will help fund under the Medicare Part D program can provide relief for many of these seniors.

But with a host of prescription plans available from insurance companies - and numerous variations among these in costs and the range of drugs covered - he and others who work with seniors and prescriptions note that older Americans may face a substantial amount of homework to find the plan which best suits their needs.

“They've got to get a good company and they've got to do an evaluation,” said Ternes.

Anyone who has Medicare Part A hospital insurance can join a Medicare Part D prescription plan. Enrollment in the drug coverage for most people is voluntary, though lower-income seniors who also have Medicaid health coverage will be automatically enrolled in a Medicare drug plan by the government.

Prescription coverage in Medicare Part D will be provided to seniors by private-sector insurers, which will be subsidized by the federal government for doing so. Seniors can enroll in their chosen plan starting on Nov. 15, with benefits available starting Jan. 1, 2006. The regular enrollment period for Medicare Part D will continue through May 15, 2006, with those opting to enroll after that point facing financial penalties on their premium. Beneficiaries will be able to sign up online at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or by contacting the desired coverage provider.

# Wellness incentives a step in right direction

Kalamazoo Gazette Editorial

Thursday, October 27, 2005

When state Sen. Tom George proposed providing economic incentives to get Medicaid recipients to adopt healthier habits, some people wanted to know why he was just concentrating on the poor.

So George, a Texas Township Republican, has come up with an incentives plan for people with private health insurance. A pair of bills he introduced in Lansing Wednesday would require insurers that sell small group plans to offer ``wellness" policies that rebate a portion of health insurance premiums as a reward for those who engage in healthy behavior or participate in wellness programs.

Employers who purchase health insurance for their workers could opt to buy the group ``wellness" coverage that would make them eligible for rebates of up to 10 percent of premiums paid. That's if employers can demonstrate that a majority of those insured are participating in employer-sponsored wellness, health maintenance or improvement programs.

The same would apply to individuals and families purchasing their own insurance and who participate in wellness programs.

Large self-insured companies are often already offering incentives to get employees to increase their physical activity, quit smoking, lose weight, reduce cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels, get regular checkups and immunizations, and comply with doctors' orders.

But Michigan law, which prohibits insurers from basing premiums on pre-existing conditions, also prohibits private insurers from offering financial incentives -- in this case, premium rebates - - related to the behavior of the insured.

That means many smaller employers have no incentive to get their workers into wellness programs.

George figures Michigan, which has some of the worst health indices in the nation, would be an excellent proving ground for an innovative idea like this.

We applaud George for the idea, hope it passes and that it makes for a healthier Michigan.

# Panel Recommends Hepatitis A Vaccine for Children and Whooping Cough Shots for Adults

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

The New York Times

Published: October 27, 2005

ATLANTA, Oct. 26 - Every toddler in the country should be immunized against hepatitis A, and every adult should receive booster doses of whooping cough vaccine, a panel advising the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention unanimously recommended Wednesday. Shots for hepatitis A, a liver disease that is rarely fatal but is easily spread, "should be integrated into the routine childhood vaccination schedule" and given between 1 and 2 years, the panel said. It also urged that adults ages 19 to 65 have the booster against whooping cough, also called pertussis, 10 years after their last shot against the disease. They could receive the vaccine at the same time as their booster against tetanus and diphtheria, because a newly licensed vaccine - Adacel, made by Sanofi Pasteur - offers protection against all three diseases.

The C.D.C. usually adopts the recommendations of the panel, known as the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, as do a number of professional groups. Though the recommendations are not binding, doctors generally follow them.

Using estimates made by the disease centers, the panel said routine hepatitis A immunization would prevent up to 180,000 infections and 30,000 illnesses each year among children and adults, advancing the goal of eliminating the disease in this country. Adverse reactions to the vaccine are reported as rare.

Each vaccine has a dual aim: to protect the recipient from illness and to prevent transmission of an infection to other people.

"By protecting personal and public health, they are vaccines at their best," Dr. William Schaffner, chairman of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University, said in an interview. He represented two professional groups, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and the Infectious Diseases Society of America, at the meeting.

The panel said its recommendation for pertussis was intended to reduce the chance that adults will give the disease to infants who are too young to be immunized or who have completed only part of the vaccination series. The disease can be fatal for infants.

Although whooping cough has declined over the years in the United States, waning immunity has led to recent outbreaks in middle schools and high schools. A number of adults who have

developed the disease have suffered rib fractures that led to life-threatening conditions like a collapsed lung, and the severe coughing can last for months among adults.

The current whooping cough vaccine recommendations for children remain unchanged: a series of five shots beginning at two months and continuing until preschool.

About 65 percent of younger adults already get the tetanus-diphtheria boosters. The figure drops to 50 percent among middle-aged adults and to about 35 percent among those 65 and older.

Adults often receive boosters in emergency rooms after stepping on rusty nails, cutting themselves or suffering other wounds.

In recommending hepatitis A shots for toddlers, the panel cited the success of a vaccination program in 17 states that had had a high incidence of the disease: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Since the program began, the incidence of hepatitis A in those states has fallen to levels lower than those in what were considered low-incidence states. In 1999, two-thirds of the hepatitis A cases occurred in the 17 high-incidence states; now only one-third do.

Of the 180,000 hepatitis A infections each year, up to 30,000 produce illness, including nausea, vomiting, jaundice and fever. Although many more infected people do not experience symptoms recognizable as hepatitis, they still can transmit the virus to others.

The hepatitis A vaccine was first licensed in 1995, and the Food and Drug Administration has approved two versions for 1-year-olds.

Dr. Tracy Lieu, a panel member from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care in Boston, said the policy of recommending immunizations only in certain states was no longer sustainable, in part because hepatitis A had declined so much in those states that "the rationale for continued vaccination does not make sense to people."

"Anecdotal evidence suggests that states may lose support for continued vaccination," Dr. Lieu said in a presentation to the meeting.

Computer models indicate that the incidence of hepatitis A will increase if all children are not immunized, Dr. Lieu said. Children play an important role in transmitting the hepatitis A virus. The virus can also be spread through contaminated water and food.

The panel also recommended that older children who have not been vaccinated against hepatitis A get shots in a "catch-up" plan.

## IN A MINUTE

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### COURT

#### Judge orders couple to pay \$2.5 million

A Clarkston couple who pleaded guilty in 2004 to ripping off the federal Medicare program must pay the government \$2.5 million — three times the amount of the theft, a federal judge ruled.

U.S. District Judge Lawrence Zatkoff said Wednesday that Elena and David Szilvagy, owners of now-defunct Prime Care Services Inc. of Bingham Farms, must pay the damages even though they have appealed their criminal convictions on the grounds that they were pressured into pleading guilty by their criminal lawyer. He said they could seek to overturn his decision if they win their criminal appeals.

They pleaded guilty in federal court to bilking Medicare

of \$865,654 to build their \$1-million-plus home in the late 1990s by putting their architect and contractors on the company's payroll.

Their civil lawyer, James Burdick of Bloomfield Hills, said he was disappointed by the decision and that the couple probably would appeal. Elena Szilvagy, 54, is serving 3 years in a federal prison in Kentucky. David Szilvagy, 53, is serving a 4-year sentence in a federal prison in Pennsylvania. Assistant U.S. Attorney James Mitzelfeld, who handles the case with colleague Leslie Wizner, said the government will try to recover the money even though the couple claim they have none.

*By David Ashenfelter*

Thursday, October 27, 2005

Livingston Briefs

Detroit News staff reports and wire services

**Howell**

## **Flu shots offered through Dec. 1**

The Livingston County Department of Public Health will hold weekly walk-in flu clinics for anyone who wants a shot. Previously, only people who were at high risk were eligible for the vaccine. The clinics will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursdays through Dec. 1 as long as the vaccine is available. There will not be a clinic on Thanksgiving Day. The department is at 2300 E. Grand River. The charge for the flu shot vaccine is \$30, and Medicare will pay the total cost for those covered. For information, call (517) 546-9850 or go to [www.lchd.org](http://www.lchd.org).



# Bid for More Home Heating Aid Fails in Senate

Associated Press

Thursday, October 27, 2005; Page A02

The Senate decided yesterday the money was not there for a substantial spending boost for the federal home heating program, deflecting arguments that soaring energy prices could force the poor to choose between heat and food this winter.

Senators voted 54 to 43 in favor of a proposal to boost the fiscal 2006 budget for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program from \$2.2 billion to \$5.1 billion. A 60-vote majority was needed to approve new spending not coupled with equivalent spending cuts.

Northern senators who pushed for increased spending for the program, led by Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine), argued that low-income families would be particularly hurt by the surge in fuel costs.

People could have to "choose between keeping the heat on, putting food on the table or buying much-needed prescription drugs," Collins said. "No family should need to make such terrible choices."

Reed cited estimates that those who heat their homes with fuel oil will need \$1,600 this winter, up \$380, and the cost of using natural gas for heating could rise \$500, to \$1,400.

The Senate also defeated, 53 to 46, an alternative put forward by Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) that would have increased spending on the program by about \$1.3 billion.

The measure would have paid for the increase with an across-the-board cut of almost 1 percent in programs included in a \$146 billion spending bill covering health, education and labor programs.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said that education grants for low-income children would be cut by \$118 million, affecting 37,000 youths, and that Head Start would lose \$63 million.

It was the third time this month that Reed unsuccessfully offered a LIHEAP amendment to a spending bill. He said he would keep trying.

The Senate rejected several other efforts to stretch the budget to obtain more money for popular programs. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) sought an extra \$5 billion for education grants for low-income children, and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) wanted \$4 billion more for the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

Meanwhile, House Republicans voted to cut student loan subsidies, child support enforcement and aid to firms hurt by unfair trade practices as various committees scrambled to piece together \$50 billion in budget cuts.

More politically difficult votes -- to cut Medicaid, food stamps and farm subsidies -- are on tap today as more panels weigh in on the bill. It was originally intended to cut \$35 billion in spending over five years, but after pressure from conservatives, GOP leaders directed committees to cut an additional \$15 billion to help pay for hurricane recovery.

President Bush met with House and Senate GOP leaders and said he was pleased with the progress. He appeared to endorse a plan by House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) for an across-the-board cut in agency budgets, perhaps including the Pentagon, by the end of the year.

Dozens of issues are at play as House and Senate Republicans cobble together the sprawling budget bill. The measure is the first in eight years to take aim at the automatic growth of federal spending programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

The House Agriculture Committee announced a plan to cut the food stamp program by \$1 billion as part of a larger effort to slice \$4.2 billion from federal agriculture programs.

In the Senate, the Budget Committee voted along party lines to bundle together the work of eight legislative committees into a bill that will be debated next week by the full Senate. The Congressional Budget Office said the Senate measure would save \$39 billion over five years -- \$4 billion more than the budget passed last spring.

# Winter bills could pose a problem for area residents

By Marc Rehmann – Greenville Daily News staff writer

With one of the state's hottest summers behind them, state officials are preparing for what may be a grueling winter.

Due to disruptions caused primarily by the hurricane-ravaged Gulf of Mexico region, Michiganians will be forced to cope with the most expensive heating bills ever this winter. Coupled with increasing unemployment and low incomes, this would be bad news for the area. State Rep. Judy Emmons, R-Sheridan, says with Montcalm County's unemployment rising almost daily, residents will be forced to work with one another.

"We are going to have to take care of each other because some of us won't be able to do it ourselves," she said. "We are going to have to go that extra mile. We are going to have to work together as well as we can."

Earlier this month, the Michigan Public Service Commission approved a number of guidelines aimed at helping people cope with high heating bills. Gov. Jennifer Granholm is expected to approve the rules, which will take effect Nov. 1.

EightCAP Inc. Community Services Coordinator Sue Eller said the upcoming months will be difficult ones for many area residents, but EightCAP will be there to assist them.

"Every year we get a rise in clients," said Eller, whose office is in Turk Lake. "People should not feel bad about asking for help because everyone is getting help these days. They need to understand that they've paid into the system their whole life."

Eller and EightCAP President John Van Nieuwenhuyzen said area residents also can contact their local faith-based organizations for information on what programs are available.

"We are looking at a very serious situation," Van Nieuwenhuyzen said. "I think most of us give what we can, but we don't give until it hurts — and that is going to have to change."

Call EightCAP at (616) 754-9310 for assistance or for more information.

## Heating rules information

The Michigan Public Service Commission approved the following rules aimed at helping Michigan residents deal with the 2005-2006 heating bills increase:

The due date for gas or electric bills can come no earlier than 22 days after the bills have been sent to customers. The current due date is 17 days for residents and 21 days for businesses.

Utilities cannot shut off service to residents who are at least 65 or whose household income doesn't exceed 200 percent of the poverty level — a total of \$38,700 for a family of four — as long as the customers pay a monthly amount equal to 6 percent of their estimated annual bill.

The existing rule now applies only to those making less than 150 percent of the poverty level and requires them to pay a monthly amount equal to 7 percent of their annual bill.

Customers owing money to utilities can't be required to pay more than \$50 a month toward their debt, plus the amount of their current electric and gas bills. There is no cap on debt settlements now.

Utilities can't require a deposit from customers unless they have been shut off for nonpayment during the past year. The deposit also can't exceed the customer's average monthly bill. The current rule allows deposits for 17 different reasons and lets utilities charge businesses a three-month deposit.

The new rules will last for six months.

Source: Associated Press

Staff writer Marc Rehmann can be reached at [mrehmann@staffordgroup.com](mailto:mrehmann@staffordgroup.com) or (616) 754-9303 ext. 3050.

# **A winter warning: Think before you heat**

By DREW ACRE Argus-Press Staff Writer

*Wednesday, October 26, 2005 10:00 AM EDT*

As the temperatures dip, many people have begun to fire up their furnaces or wood stoves and dig out their space heaters, electric blankets and other heating items to prepare for winter's worst. But all that extra heat comes at a cost, with more fire casualties reported during the winter than any other season.

There were approximately 18,750 fires reported across the state in 2003. Of those, there were 161 casualties - 96 of which occurred during the winter season.

"I've been to plenty of fires and the one thing they all have in common is the homeowner thought it 'won't happen to me,' but it can happen to anybody," said Corunna-Caledonia Fire Chief Scott Johnson.

Some dangers include clogged dryer vents, smoking in bed and leaving heaters on at night.

Firefighters add that every home should be equipped with a working smoke alarm and fire extinguisher.

"One of the worst things I see, is people disconnecting their smoke alarms in the kitchen. Then later, when something's burning, they don't know until it's too late," said Russ Wahl, assistant fire chief.

Because they are flammable, decorations, gifts and other items associated with winter holidays also bring words of caution from firefighters.

"This is the season where we have a lot of holidays with decorations," said Wahl. "That's great, holidays are meant to be enjoyed, but people also need to be careful with where they place them. Usually the worst time of the year for fires is Christmas, when all the presents are bought."

Johnson said above all, homeowners simply need to think ahead.

"Almost every fire I've been to could have been prevented," said Johnson. "It all boils down to common sense - think about what you're doing before you do it."

Wahl agreed, and added that most fire prevention measures can be accomplished at no cost to the homeowner.

"The best thing about all these tips is people can do most of them without spending a penny," said Wahl. "All it costs is time."

Wednesday, October 26, 2005

## State's needy shouldn't be left out in the cold

Port Huron Times Herald

Michigan winters can be long and cruel, especially for residents who must face cold days and nights without heat. In a state where temperatures often drop below zero during the winter, struggling families shouldn't have to worry that their heat will be turned off if they can't afford to keep up with their heating bills.

Our residents may find it even more difficult to keep up this year. Heating bills are expected to skyrocket this winter. The Michigan Public Service Commission said heating costs will jump about 46% this winter, or an average of about \$59 a month. The average bill this winter is projected to be close to \$200 a month.

With our struggling economy and high rate of unemployment in the Thumb Area, that spike could be disastrous. No one should have to choose between paying for heat and buying groceries or prescription drugs. That's why I've sponsored legislation with my colleagues in the House and Senate that will keep the heat on all winter long for struggling families.

Our legislation will prohibit utility companies from shutting off service to low-income homes during the winter months, provide payment assistance through emergency funds and offer tax incentives to help families make their homes more energy-efficient.

Under our plan, utility companies can't shut off service between Dec. 1 and March 31, 2006, for households earning less than 200% of the poverty level, just under \$40,000 for a family of four. It also will put more money into the Home Heating Credit; expand eligibility from 110% of the poverty level to 125%; and give recipients from an average \$210 to \$250 a year.

Our plan also rewards residents who take steps to keep their winter bills down. People who winterize their homes and install energy-efficient appliances can get 50% of their expenses, up to \$2,500, back in tax deductions. The deduction is available to households that make up to 300% of the poverty level, or about \$58,000 for a family of four.

Another component seeks to increase the amount of federal funds available for home-heating assistance. The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program block grants to states have risen only 4% in the past 20 years, while the rate of inflation has increased 81% during that time. Michigan's families will need more federal assistance to help weather our cold winters in the face of soaring heating costs. Our package will press Congress to increase the appointed LIHEAP funds from \$1.8 billion to \$3.4 billion.

Other bills in our package will allow tax filers to donate to an energy fund and call for an energy summit to find long-term solutions to heating issues in Michigan. Winter and its frigid temperatures are right around the corner. We must act now so none of our residents are left out in the cold.

*John Espinoza represents the 83rd District of the Michigan House of Representatives. Write him at Box 30014, Lansing, 48909; call him at (517) 373-0853; or e-mail him at [johnespinoza@house.mi.gov](mailto:johnespinoza@house.mi.gov).*

Originally published October 26, 2005

# Utility shutoff ban may not be needed, but it's reassuring

Bay City Times Editorial

Thursday, October 27, 2005

It has taken the prospect of a huge jump in the cost of home-heating fuels to get Michigan lawmakers to consider keeping poor people warm this winter.

A package of bills that state Democrats are pushing in the Legislature would ban utilities from shutting off heating fuels to occupied homes for nonpayment of bills between Dec. 1 this year and March 15 next year.

That ban would apply only to households that earn below 200 percent of the poverty level, about \$38,700 for a family of four.

In the far north here, it's a common-sense proposal.

It could be a matter of survival.

There are great private programs, such as the PeopleCare partnership between Consumers Energy and the Salvation Army to help people with basic needs, such as keeping their heat.

But a shutoff ban is still needed, simply as a last resort.

It does not take away the responsibility of the homeowner or renter to eventually pay utility bills.

Even the state of Ohio, with its comparatively tropical climate to our south, is considering a similar shutoff ban for this winter.

It just makes sense.

For now.

Let's get everyone safely through this costly coming winter, and see how it goes

Our View is the editorial opinion of The Bay City Times, as determined by the newspaper's editorial board, which includes the editorial page editor, the editor and the publisher.

# **Governor Granholm Announces New Partnership to Protect Michigan's Children**

**October 26, 2005**

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced that Michigan has partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to provide text messages to wireless phone subscribers in Michigan when an AMBER Alert is issued in their area. This new tool will allow all citizens to aid in the protection of Michigan's children.

"A missing child is every parent's worst nightmare," said Granholm. "I am pleased to announce this new partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children which will allow Michigan citizens to use the advances of modern technology to help protect our children."

The Governor encouraged wireless phone customers in Michigan to visit [www.wirelessamberalerts.org](http://www.wirelessamberalerts.org) to sign up for the new free service or visit the Governor's website at [www.michigan.gov/gov](http://www.michigan.gov/gov). Persons who sign up for the wireless AMBER Alert will receive a text message whenever an AMBER Alert is issued in their geographic area. The text message will provide the same information contained in emergency broadcasts, including the child's description.

"The statistics are clear. Abducted children who are harmed are usually harmed within the first three hours," said Colonel Tadarial J. Sturdivant, director of the Michigan State Police. "The more people who quickly receive information about a missing child, the more likely we are to recover that child safely."

AMBER Alert is a partnership between law enforcement and media outlets to immediately disseminate information when law enforcement has determined that a child has been abducted or is in imminent danger. The AMBER Alert program began in 1996 when Dallas area broadcasters teamed with local police to aid in the search for an abducted nine-year-old girl. Since then, all 50 states have developed AMBER Alert systems. Michigan's AMBER Alert plan is credited with the safe recovery of more than 100 children.

Amber Alert of Michigan partners include the Michigan Department of State Police, Michigan Association of Broadcasters, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Sheriffs' Association, Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, and SBC.



Michigan Report

October 26, 2005

## **PLAN ALLOWS CELL PHONE MESSAGES FOR AMBER ALERTS**

Michigan residents who choose to now can receive a text message on their wireless phone any time an Amber alert is issued in their region. The program is the result of a partnership between the state and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The program sends the same message to cell phone subscribers as is sent to media outlets in the region.

“The statistics are clear. Abducted children who are harmed are usually harmed within the first three hours,” said State Police Director Tadarial Sturdivant. “The more people who quickly receive information about a missing child, the more likely we are to recover that child safely.”

Those interested can sign up for the service at [www.wirelessamberalerts.org](http://www.wirelessamberalerts.org).

*MIRS*

*October 26, 2005*

## **Finding Kids Through Text Messages**

Michigan is working with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to provide text messages to wireless phone subscribers in Michigan when an Amber Alert is issued in their area.

By signing up to a free service ([www.wirelessameralerts.org](http://www.wirelessameralerts.org)), people will receive Amber Alerts in their area that provide basic descriptions of the missing child.

"The statistics are clear. Abducted children who are harmed are usually harmed within the first three hours," said Col. Tadarial J. **Sturdivant**, director of the Michigan State Police. "The more people who quickly receive information about a missing child, the more likely we are to recover that child safely."

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October 27, 2005

# Child abuse charge lodged

## Infant suffocated at home day care in June

By IAN C. STOREY

Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY - A local day-care provider is being charged with felony child abuse after an infant suffocated at her home operation this year.

Dana Marie Lee, 39, is charged with one count of second-degree child abuse, a four-year felony, in the June death of 8-month-old Isabella Nichole Korth.

Isabella was at Lee's licensed home day care at 6297 Cherry Blossom on June 20 when she apparently became trapped between a mattress and a wall.

The child was discovered not breathing and later pronounced dead at Munson Medical Center.

An autopsy performed in Grand Rapids found Isabella died of "probable asphyxia by suffocation," according to 86th District Court records.

Lee allegedly told Grand Traverse County sheriff's officials she placed Isabella on the lower bunk of a bed between a wall and pillows.

In the police report, Lee said she had checked on Isabella, but later found the baby had moved and became pinned against the mattress and the wall, where she was blue and not breathing.

Lee did not return a message seeking comment about the criminal charge.

The state's Department of Human Services suspended Lee's day care registration immediately afterward and said her license would be revoked.

State rules for day-care providers require children a year and younger to "sleep in a crib or playpen," according to court records.

Grand Traverse County Prosecutor Alan Schneider said the violation of that rule was among the reasons to bring the charge, but also to send a message of caution to other providers.

"What we are looking at is to deter other providers from ignoring the rules, pay a little more attention and not be so causal," he said. "An infant doesn't have the ability to protect herself, so it is different than an accidental death of an adult who has the ability to detect danger."

A tentative preliminary examination for Lee is set for Nov. 9.

# Hearing for principal delayed Police report reveals details about criminal sexual conduct charge

Thursday, October 27, 2005

BY AMALIE NASH AND ART AISNER  
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporters

The allegations against a suspended Pioneer High School class principal include kissing a female student on the lips, grabbing her buttocks, offering her a ride to visit her father in Traverse City and saying he would pick her up on a city street after a fight with her mother.

Harry Hayward, 51, denied any inappropriate behavior with the student when detectives interviewed him, but conceded he may have kissed the student on or near her lips, hugged her and offered her rides, according to a police report obtained by The News through the Freedom of Information Act.

Hayward was scheduled to have a scheduled preliminary court hearing Wednesday on charges of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct and assault and battery but it was delayed until Nov. 16. The police report of the incident was released Wednesday to The News.

The 16-year-old student, whose name was not released, told police she felt uncomfortable around Hayward prior to the Sept. 7 incident because he often hugged her and kissed her on the cheek and offered to fix her school schedule for her junior year.

The girl's mother, apparently unaware of her daughter's concerns, said she contacted Hayward to talk to her daughter about her possibly using marijuana because she felt Hayward was a good mentor.

The girl told police she was called to Hayward's office, reluctantly went, and when she arrived, he hugged and kissed her on her lips while asking about her summer, reports said. She said Hayward groped and patted her butt, then said her mother was overreacting to finding pictures of her smoking marijuana, according to reports.

The girl said Hayward again kissed and hugged her as she was leaving and told her, "What happens in this office stays in this office," according to the police reports. The girl returned to class and told a classmate what happened. He later told police that she was near tears and shaken. The girls' friends eventually convinced her to report the incident, police said.

With police recording the conversation, the girl called Hayward on his cell phone and told him that she had gotten into a fight with her mother. He offered to pick her up, and she also spoke with him about accepting his offer for a ride to Traverse City, the police report said. She told him the kiss on the lips made her uncomfortable, and he responded that it was out of friendship, the report said.

Detectives interviewed Hayward at his home the same night, Sept. 12, and he said he was attempting to help the girl and acting as a conduit because she was having problems with her mother. He told investigators he hugs many students, including boys, to build confidence in them and help them trust adults.

According to the police report, Hayward initially denied kissing the girl even on the cheek, then later conceded he may have kissed her on the lips. He also denied touching her buttocks and said he was touching her backpack when he hugged her, reports said.

Hayward told the detectives he "knows the boundaries" and only offered to pick the girl up that evening because he was concerned she was walking the streets alone, reports said. He said the allegations would hurt his career.

At the end of the interview, Hayward said, "Things could have been and should have been done differently," the report said.

School officials were notified the next day, and Hayward was placed on administrative leave.

Officials told police that offering to meet or drive a student outside of school hours would be a violation of school policy.

Hayward's attorneys asked to adjourn Wednesday's hearing because they needed more time to evaluate a statement the victim gave to school officials. Ann Arbor attorney John Shea, who is representing Hayward along with Detroit-based attorney Steven Fishman, said prosecutors provided the report about 30 minutes prior to the hearing and there was not enough time to compare it with other statements made regarding the incident.

The two-page written statement is critical to Hayward's defense, Shea argued, because it is the only one of the four already provided by prosecutors in the victim's own words.

Washtenaw County Assistant Prosecutor Blaine Longworth contested the adjournment and explained he also received the statement from school officials shortly before the proceedings.

"If there is any disadvantage, I would argue the same disadvantage applies to us," he said, noting the victim has now appeared twice in court prepared to testify but could not due to delays.

Longworth suggested the court reconvene after Hayward's attorneys reviewed the statement in the courthouse, as he had.

District Judge John Collins said the case was too important to rush through because the allegations involved a student and school authority.

Shea would not comment on details in the report and maintained Hayward's innocence after Wednesday's court appearance.

"When he pled not guilty (at his arraignment), he meant not guilty," Shea said.

Fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct is a high-court misdemeanor punishable by a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment and a \$500 fine. Assault and/or assault and battery is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 93 days in jail.

Amalie Nash can be reached at [anash@annarbornews.com](mailto:anash@annarbornews.com) or (734) 994-6832.

# Parents could face jail for teen drinking parties

October 27, 2005

By Rebecca Jones  
Birmingham Eccentric Staff Writer

Parents who host stand to lose even more - up to 90 days of freedom.

Bloomfield Township is considering a stiffer penalty for adults who host parties where minors drink alcohol.

Now, the harshest sentence for someone convicted of violating the township ordinance is a \$500 fine plus court costs. For Gisela Zetsche - who pleaded no contest to a charge stemming from a June party - that worked out to be \$3,000 at her sentencing last month. That brought attention to the issue.

"We need to put some teeth in this ordinance," said Police Chief Jeff Werner.

Trustee Sherry Stefanos agreed. "Five hundred dollars in this community is a drop in the bucket. That is not a sacrifice."

But trustees were divided about whether 90 days is too much for first-time offenders.

West Bloomfield, Farmington Hills, Beverly Hills and Bloomfield Hills impose up to 30 days in jail for a first offense, and 90 days for a subsequent violation. Birmingham and Waterford ordinances penalize with up to 90 days for all offenses, and Auburn Hills ordinance doesn't include a jail term. A person charged under the state law faces jail time, but Werner indicated the township typically charges under local ordinance.

"There's a big difference between a first offense and a second offense," said trustee Leo Savoie. He was also concerned that parents could be charged - and sentenced to 90 days - if they didn't know that a party was happening.

"We're just asking for some teeth," Werner told the board. "How many is up to you."

That and other details will be worked out before trustees vote on the ordinance at their next meeting.

When the house party ordinance was adopted almost 20 years ago, it called for a jail sentence, but in the early 1990s, the potential for jail time was removed. Supervisor Dave Payne said no one knows why. He called for the ordinance to be redrafted after "an issue" in the township.

"The penalty is definitely appropriate," he said. "It's very unlikely that a first-time offender would ever serve 90 days."

Township resident Alfred Gade said he thinks the stiffer penalty is unwarranted. "I believe this is an overreaction, and I don't see anything wrong with the existing ordinance."

But Lisa Machesky, director of the Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition, said her group works with teens to make responsible choices. "When they go to a party where a parent is serving, everything we've done goes out the window."

"The first offense is enough," said Treasurer Dan Devine. "All it takes is one kid to drink and get in the car and kill somebody. We're not going to tolerate the first, second or third time."

# Honoring the victims of domestic violence

By SARA ROBINSON

Alpena News Staff Writer

A roomful of people gathered Wednesday at a candlelight vigil hosted by Shelter, Inc. in order to commemorate the lives of 55 people who died last year in Michigan as the result of domestic violence.

A row of shoes, both large and small, labeled with the names of the victims, served as somber reminders of the lives that were lost.

"It's very important for us to remember this is a solemn event, but it is also a celebration," said Shelter, Inc. Executive Director Bret Finzel. He reminded those in attendance that the vigil was also an occasion to celebrate the lives of the victims, and to celebrate the strength and courage of those who had survived domestic violence situations.

Linda Peltz, the main speaker at the vigil, was Rogers City resident who was in an abusive relationship for 10 years. Peltz read several poems she had written in order to explain what it is like to be a victim of domestic violence to people who have never been in that situation.

"We aren't stupid," Peltz said. "We didn't put a sign on our foreheads and say, 'Hey, pick me. I want to be abused.'"

Sixteen months ago, Peltz also lost a daughter, Melissa Kamyszek, to domestic violence. She said there had been no physical abuse to serve as a forewarning that her daughter would be murdered by an ex-boyfriend.

"The only thing that was a common thread in everything I've read and seen in abuse, was control," she said.

Peltz said the realization her daughter was also a victim of domestic violence came after she read an article citing the number of people who had died in Michigan as a result of domestic violence.

"It was to my shock that she was considered one of them," she said. "Until that moment in time, it had not entered my mind. I'm still stunned by it."

Peltz said she had undertaken the mission of increasing awareness of domestic violence.

"I think that God gives you a mission in life," she said. "And one of mine is absolutely to break the silence."

Toward the end of the vigil, the names of the 55 who died last year were read, followed by the tolling of a bell.

*Sara Robinson can be reached via e-mail at [srobinson@thealpenanews.com](mailto:srobinson@thealpenanews.com) or by phone at 354-3111 ext. 316.*

## LETTERS

Thursday, October 27, 2005

### **Tune in - domestic violence is your business**

If someone close to you was assaulted by a stranger, what would you do? Would you worry about her safety? Provide support? Look for resources for assistance? Involve the police and court system? Probably, all of that and more.

But what happens when that same person is assaulted by someone she loves and trusts? Do you still react in the same way? If you are like most Americans, who believe domestic violence is none of their business, most likely you wouldn't.

Make no mistake. It is your business. Domestic violence systematically shatters lives, destroys families and devastates communities. One out of four women have reported they have been physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.

Domestic violence is not only a crime. It is a health issue, an economic issue, a family issue, a social issue and a human rights issue. Each of us has a responsibility to help stop the violence. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. As Gov. Jennifer Granholm stated in her Domestic Violence Month Proclamation, Domestic Violence Month provides an excellent opportunity for citizens to learn more about domestic violence issues and to show support for the numerous organizations and individuals who are providing advocacy efforts, services, and assistance to domestic violence victims. This month, and throughout the year, make domestic violence your business and join us in ending domestic violence. Please support your local domestic violence shelters and programs and help educate others about this issue.

Alexandra S. Matish, Ann Arbor

Cheryl B. Sugerman, Ann Arbor



Advice

# Abusive behavior can pass from one generation to the next

**Dear Abby:** Last week, my 1-year-old son, "Tommy," crawled up on the couch where his father, "Monte," was resting. Tommy smacked his daddy in the face with a toy. Monte slapped Tommy back so hard he left a welt on his face. I grabbed the baby and said some things I perhaps shouldn't have. Monte got so mad at me that he threw me on the couch and began choking me.

A neighbor called Monte's father, "Lyle," to the house. Lyle asked what happened. When I told him Monte had slapped Tommy in the face, Monte called me a liar. Then Lyle turned around and came after me, cornering me in the kitchen.



**DEAR ABBY**  
Jeane Phillips

He got in my face and screamed that I was at fault for Monte losing his temper. I was cornered three times. Each time I tried to move away, he'd start up again.

Monte just stood there and watched me holding the baby and

getting screamed at. I am so hurt. It's one thing to have a fight with my husband, but his father had no place getting in my face. Monte said his dad was trying to prove a point — that a person can only take so much. Monte said he patted his father on the back for what he did. I am no longer talking to his father. Please help me.

— *Shaking in Ohio*

**Dear Shaking:** To slap a 1-year-old baby and leave a welt on his face is child abuse. Throwing you on a couch and trying to choke you is spousal abuse. What his father did is verbal abuse. Monte is standing behind his father because he thinks this is normal behavior. Unless you

take your baby and get out of there, your son will turn out just like his father and grandfather.

If you are afraid to leave, call the National Domestic Violence toll-free hotline: (800) 799-7233. Counselors there will help you formulate an escape plan. (For people with hearing impairments, the TTY number to dial is (800) 787-3224.)

## Victim called suspect 'Nazi'

### Stabber says he wanted ex-girlfriend to stop taunting him

PUBLISHED: October 27, 2005

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

*A girl who was stabbed by her ex-boyfriend inside Romeo High School had teased him by calling him a "Nazi" due to his swastika tattoo.*

"You knew it bothered him, that's why you called him a name, isn't it?" said attorney Arthur Garton, who is representing Eric Schorling in his attempted-murder trial, to the victim, Nicole Lambert, on the stand in Macomb Circuit Court.

"Yes," Lambert, 17, testified.

"(I) just teased him," she replied to another question. "People knew he had a swastika tattoo."

Lambert's testimony highlighted the second day of the trial of Schorling, who stabbed Lambert in the back with a 5- or 6-inch bladed knife in the school's hallway minutes before classes started Sept. 27, 2004.

Schorling, 17, claims he didn't intend to kill her, and Garton has argued his client is only guilty of assault with intent to do great bodily harm, which carries a maximum 10-year prison sentence, compared to attempted murder, which carries a sentence of up to life in prison. Garton previously said Schorling did the stabbing to eliminate an ongoing "problem."

In a video and audiotape that was played at the trial, Schorling told his parents in a Macomb County Sheriff's Office room: "I just wanted it to stop."

The two had dated from October 2003 to June 2004 when Lambert broke up with Schorling, she said. She said she was "upset" about the breakup, and when asked by Garton whether she was bitter, she answered, "We both were."

Schorling had gotten a swastika tattoo on his stomach while they were dating. She said the tattoo "bothered" her but she continued to date him. Two days before the stabbing, she said Schorling came to Croswell Elementary School, where she "was practicing," and a female friend of Lambert called him a "Nazi." He started chasing them, and the girls fled

in a vehicle.

On the morning of the stabbing, Lambert said that she didn't realize she had been stabbed, thinking she had been punched in the back.

"I walked in the classroom and the teacher said I was stabbed," she said.

"I didn't believe him."

After spending three weeks in the hospital, she returned home. She returned to Romeo High, where she still attends, about three months after the accident.

Schorling had attended Romeo High, but left in September so had improperly entered the school the day of the incident.

A male Romeo High student said he saw Schorling "rapidly" move past him in the hallway and said, "Dude, I just f----- stabbed Nicole. I f----- stabbed Nicole. I stabbed her. I gotta go. I gotta get out of here."

The student said, "I couldn't comprehend it. I did not take it seriously."

The student said he "tried to get his attention" but Schorling continued to walk away quickly.

October 27, 2005

## **Killer's life sentence reduced**

Jenny Lancour

[jlancour@dailypress.net](mailto:jlancour@dailypress.net)

ESCANABA - Because of a trial mistake in 1977, the life sentence of convicted murderer Jay Charles Bartlett was reduced to 25-50 years during a resentencing Tuesday in Delta County Circuit Court.

Bartlett was convicted of killing his mother and brother and wounding his father at the family's rural gas station and store, North Delta Plaza, located on US 41 in Osier on May 10, 1977. The incident happened on Bartlett's 17th birthday. He was sentenced to life in prison.

### **A look back**

Jenny Lancour - [jlancour@dailypress.net](mailto:jlancour@dailypress.net)

ESCANABA - On his 17th birthday, Jay Charles Bartlett shot and killed his mother and brother and attempted to kill his father. That was 28 years ago in Osier, about four miles south of Trenary, at the family's home and store known as North Delta Plaza.

Looking at the site today, one would not know it was the site of a double murder. The building along US 41 is gone. All that remains is a parking lot now used for car pooling.

Bartlett shot and killed his mother, Stella, 39, and later killed his 15-year-old brother Charles on May 10, 1977. When his father, Rodney Bartlett, arrived home after work, the teen confronted him with a .22 caliber automatic pistol, wounding him. His father's injuries required surgery at Marquette General Hospital where he was a patient for 13 days.

# Scouts cooking breakfast for 200 needy people

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION  
Thursday, October 27, 2005

By Kristin Longley  
klongley@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249

The Tall Pine Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan are teaming up for the third annual "Feed the Hungry Pancake Breakfast." The event will be held from 9-11 a.m. Saturday at the First Presbyterian Church, 746 S. Saginaw St. Local Scouts will be cooking and serving eggs, sausage and pancakes. The breakfast is expected to feed more than 200 people in need.

Details: (810) 239-4441 or (810) 235-2531.

**IN A MINUTE****LEGISLATION****Council changes ordinance for day care centers**

After about 2 years of discussion, the **Farmington Hills** City Council amended a 25-year-old city ordinance Monday that prohibited day care centers with more than six children from operating within subdivisions and other residential neighborhoods.

The vote was 4-3, with Councilmen John Akouri, Randy Bruce and Ken Massey dissenting. They argued that for-profit day care centers are commercial businesses like any other and that changing the ordinance would open the door for more commercial encroachment in neighborhoods.

The old ordinance allowed licensed day care homes of up to six children to operate in neighborhoods and those with up to 12 to locate on main or secondary roads.

Mayor Vicki Barnett voted for the change. She said that children's day care programs are a necessity for parents today and that they are distinct from a consulting business or a furniture store inside a neighborhood.

"It is a good law," she said. "What we're doing is recognizing that we work differently and care for our families differently. We're modernizing our ordinance to deal with the realities of family."

Barring a groundswell of opposition from residents, the amended ordinance will go into effect Nov. 14.

*By Julie Edgar*

# Day-care firm bringing Rainbow to Byron

Thursday, October 27, 2005

By Julie Makarewicz  
The Grand Rapids Press

BYRON TOWNSHIP -- Rainbow Child Development Centers is planning to open a new child-care center in Byron Township.

The Lathrup Village-based firm received approval from the township Planning Commission to rezone 1.5 acres at the southeast corner of Byron Center Avenue SW and 68th Street from residential to contract office. The approval is contingent upon Rainbow securing setback and fence height variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The 20-year-old firm operates 42 day-care centers in five states, with locations on West River Drive and two in Kentwood.

Under contract office zoning, Rainbow agrees to limit uses to those allowed in an office district if the center closes or the facility is sold.

Some neighbors worried how the center might affect property values.

Tim Slot, a township trustee and Planning Commission member, believes the center will be an asset. Slot is a real estate agent.

"I think I would rather have this there than a bunch of duplexes," Planning Commissioner Bernie Schuitema said.

"I probably wouldn't mind this in my back yard, but that's really all I can go by."

Planning member Carroll Elenbaas was uncertain about whether the location was right for a child-care facility.

"I do think this is a good use, but I think there are bigger questions we need to consider. There are other properties in the township zoned for this type of use, and rezoning this to office would basically be spot zoning," she said.

The office district is the only zoning classification in the township where child-care centers are allowed.

Company officials said the new facility will accommodate about 100 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old, will employ about 10 to 15 people and will be open weekdays only.

# Foster Care Placements

The New York Times

Published: October 27, 2005

To the Editor:

Re "Placements in Foster Care Are at Lowest Since Mid-80's" (news article, Oct. 23):

As a social worker for chronically ill foster children in New York City from 2003 to 2005, I witnessed families torn apart by drug abuse, violence, poverty, homelessness and psychiatric disorders.

More often than not, these families were met by a horrific bureaucracy that focused more on marking arbitrary checklists during yearly audits of foster care agencies than it did on the actual quality of services provided to foster children and their families.

The philosophy of New York's foster care system may have changed for the better in emphasizing the importance of keeping families intact, but too many children still languish in foster care while their biological parents are tossed from one referral to another with few continuous sources of effective support.

Are foster care placements at a remarkable low because of the system's success, or are those numbers a reflection of simply having changed the rules as to what constitutes a safe home and family?

Elizabeth Arend

Baltimore, Oct. 23, 2005



October 27, 2005

## **Area groups pitch in to help both their community and the world**

Escanaba Daily Press

Julie Knauf - [jknauf@dailypress.net](mailto:jknauf@dailypress.net)

ESCANABA - The Community Action Agency, Bishop Noa Home and Big Bay de Noc School showed some tender loving care on Make a Difference Day Saturday.

The annual event was created by USA Weekend Magazine and takes place on the fourth Saturday of October. It encourages people across the United States to volunteer for a good cause. For seven years the CAA and VFW Post 2998 and Auxiliary have participated in Make a Difference Day. The CAA's Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Program with the VFW have donated supplies to the Alliance Against Violence and Abuse every October. Donations this year included phone cards, paper, laundry, cleaning and personal hygiene products.

"I think it's terrific. (The Alliance) is so important in the community," said Mary Bunnin, director of the Foster Grandparent Program.

"When you look at running one home, times that by 15. That's how many beds we have at the shelter," said Hazel Satterly, executive director at the Alliance. The contributions from programs at the CAA and the VFW are greatly appreciated because "those are very needed items at the shelter," she said.

Thursday, October 27, 2005

## Good deeds: Celebrating unsung heroes

### Dearborn teen finds way to make difference

By Dorothy Bourdet / The Detroit News

**DEARBORN** -- When 10-year-old Tawney Fay's mother sent her to a strip mall with \$20 to "buy a shirt or something," she came home with hangers, fabric softener sheets, light bulbs and a couple of suckers. She explained to her single mom, Rose Fay, that she didn't buy a shirt because they needed the other items more.

"She's always just been different like that," Rose Fay said.

Now, 16-year-old Tawney is busy baking dog biscuits and making bandanas for dogs awaiting adoption at the Dearborn Animal Shelter. She said the project is a small way of helping out.

"It's for my benefit, I think. So I feel good about myself," she said. "I want to give back to the community. It's not so that it looks good on college applications."

Tawney has been part of an impressive list of volunteer groups, fund-raisers and community projects.

Today, the Edsel Ford High School junior will be one of seven people honored at the YWCA of Western Wayne County Kathleen Ligoeki 2005 Women of the Year luncheon.

Edsel Ford counselor Robin Armstrong and leadership teacher Mark Tyler said Tawney is an exceptional girl with a big heart.

"She's motivated from within," Tyler said.

In June, Tawney heard about a fellow student whose family lacked the money to pay for their mother's funeral.

Immediately she called up the Dearborn Fire Department, whose help she had enlisted before, and asked for help getting a fund-raiser organized.

"I don't know where she gets the phone numbers or makes the connections, but within minutes it's almost like she pulls them out of thin air and is ready to take action," Tyler said.

Rose Fay worries that Tawney doesn't take enough time for herself.

"For no apparent reason she'll just clean out my refrigerator," she said.

Tawney loves her summer mentoring job with Students Taking a New Direction, because it gives her a chance to reach out to other kids.

"It's important to me that I show other kids that being a leader and doing community and getting out there and being involved in the community that you live in is important," she said.

Armstrong said Tawney doesn't wait for needs to come to her.

"What's really amazing about Tawney is she seeks it out on her own. She just hears about a need and takes it on," Armstrong said.

Karen Murphy, CEO of the YWCA of Western Wayne County, said Tawney's accomplishments and sense of responsibility are notable because of her youth.

"This is probably unique because it's a young gal and she's already demonstrated leadership qualities," Murphy said. "This is future gal we're going to keep our eye on."

Contact us

- Send us your good deeds in 150 words or less, and we'll publish them each Thursday.
- E-mail us at [gooddeeds@detnews.com](mailto:gooddeeds@detnews.com)
- Write to The Detroit News, Good Deeds, c/o Metro Desk, 615 W. Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226. Please leave a daytime phone number.
- To read past Good Deeds columns, go to [detnews.com/wayne](http://detnews.com/wayne)

*You can reach Dorothy Bourdet at (734) 462-2203 or [dbourdet@detnews.com](mailto:dbourdet@detnews.com).*

# Older job seekers can get some help

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL  
FIRST EDITION

Thursday, October 27, 2005

By Ron Fongerr  
fonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

County residents 55 or older can get free help with resume writing, job applications, career counseling and other services through the Valley Area Agency on Aging. Workers must meet certain income requirements, according to a news release.

For more information, call Gary Lachon at (810) 232-9220.

## **County OKs 'living wage'**

### **Mental Health Department mandate will add \$2 million to its expenses**

PUBLISHED: October 27, 2005

By Chad Selweski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Macomb County's new "living wage" policy, requiring county contractors to pay their workers at least \$9.58 an hour, could cost the county mental health department more than \$2 million a year. The Department of Community Mental Health, which contracts for services with more than 124 companies and agencies, will face the biggest impact under the new requirement. The department has concluded so far that vendors will be forced to provide pay raises for 869 mental health care workers, potentially resulting in a \$1.9 million cost increase for the department. That figure is expected to grow as an additional 77 vendors are surveyed about the new wage rules and the effect on pay for clerical workers is factored in.

"It's kind of startling," said CMH Deputy Director Robert Slaine. "Not many pay that living wage."

Intended to lift workers above the federal poverty line, the new policy requires a \$9.58 hourly wage, or \$12.09 an hour for workers who don't receive health care benefits. Slaine has found that most of the department's contractors currently pay between \$7 and \$9 an hour.

The contract workers largely fall into three categories: those providing care at group homes; those conducting workshops and programs that help the mentally disabled gain job skills; and those who provide in-home lessons on personal care that leads to independent living.

County Commissioners Paul Gielegghem and Jon Switalski, who proposed the living wage, say they doubt a vendor can pass the cost increases onto the county without risking the loss of a contract.

"We do have contractors who provide a living wage," said Gielegghem, a Clinton Township Democrat. "Those that don't will have to learn from those that do as to how they can absorb those costs."

Switalski, a Warren Democrat, said the policy was partially designed to lift out of poverty those workers who "do the tough work of caring for our most vulnerable."

CMH spends about \$92 million a year on contracted work, so the projected \$1.9 million increase could boost the department's costs by about 2 percent. Slaine said the options would be to ask the county Board of Commissioners for additional funds, attempt to absorb the cost increase within the \$132 million CMH budget, or ask the contractors to absorb the cost.

The 26-member county board approved the policy Wednesday by an 18-8 vote. Sal Rocca was the only Republican who voted in its favor. A motion to postpone the vote was defeated, as was a motion to revisit the policy next September.

The impact of the policy was reduced Monday when the board approved a series of amendments that exempts part-time workers and companies with 10 or fewer employees.

Most Republican commissioners Monday balked at the proposal because no information was available on the number of workers affected and the estimated costs incurred from higher contracts.

GOP Commissioner Don Brown of Washington Township, who has relatives in the mental health care business, said he's concerned that increased costs would add to the county budget's \$10 million deficit or result in fewer services for the mentally ill and disabled.

"Somebody's going to have to pay for this," Brown said. "I'd hate to see any of these programs cut."

# Poll: Voters support benefits for partners of gay workers

10/26/2005, 5:18 p.m. ET

By DAVID EGGERT  
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Forty-seven percent of Michigan voters support a court ruling that allows governments and universities to provide benefits for the partners of gay workers, while 39 percent oppose it and 14 percent are undecided, a new poll shows.

Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm wants the state Civil Service Commission to approve domestic partner benefits for state employees now that the court has ruled. But Republican Attorney General Mike Cox disagrees and is appealing the court ruling.

Forty-eight percent of those surveyed in the poll released Wednesday by Lansing-based EPIC/MRA said they supported Granholm's position, while 41 percent backed Cox's stance. Eleven percent were undecided.

An Ingham County circuit judge ruled last month that public employers can offer domestic partner benefits without violating a gay marriage ban approved by voters in 2004. The ballot issue was known as Proposal 2.

Cox asked the judge for a restraining order to halt her ruling and stop the state and city of Kalamazoo from offering domestic partner benefits until the issue can be decided by the appellate courts.

Circuit Judge Joyce Draganchuk turned down his request.

The poll of 600 likely voters statewide was conducted Oct. 19 through Tuesday. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Ed Sarpolus of EPIC/MRA said voters' views on domestic partner benefits may depend on their age.

"If you're under 55, you're more likely to support domestic partner benefits," he said. "If you're older or more conservative, you tend to oppose them."

Cox said the poll will not change his decision to appeal Draganchuk's ruling.

"I will fight to uphold the will of the people," he said in a statement. "The only poll that mattered showed the overwhelming majority of Michigan wanted Prop 2."

# Poverty Disaster

## Congress sends storm relief bill to nation's poor

Detroit Free Press

*October 27, 2005*

Hurricane Katrina may have opened more Americans' eyes to poverty at home, but Congress continues to look the other way. Partly in the name of coming up with money for hurricane relief, Republicans are quietly and shamefully trimming billions of dollars from programs that help the poor and those with disabilities.

Even these heartless actions won't balance the budget because the GOP has put more tax cuts -- \$70 billion worth -- on its agenda. That's going the wrong direction. In fact, it would make more sense to halt or at least delay two already passed tax breaks scheduled to take effect Jan. 1. That alone would create breathing room in the budget of about \$200 billion over the next decade -- an amount that matches top-end estimates for hurricane relief.

Instead, a House committee today is expected to cut Medicaid by \$14.7 billion over the next five years. Other committees will target food stamps and the Earned Income Tax Credit, a tax refund program that helps the working poor stay out of poverty. They will be pushing people over the brink into disaster as surely as Katrina did.

Michigan alone could lose an estimated \$55 million worth of food stamp assistance and \$280 million for its Medicaid program. That would leave the state with stark choices, such as cutting prescription coverage for the poor and disabled or mental health care, or ratcheting down the eligibility requirements so fewer people qualify. Either way, more people would have fewer ways to manage their health problems.

The chaos here would come if Congress bans Michigan's practice of charging a tax on managed care organizations. The state uses that money to leverage the additional \$280 million in federal dollars -- a system Congress considers an end-run around the rules. U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, and a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, hopes to get any change phased in so the damage isn't abrupt. The Senate has a better plan to grandfather in Michigan and the other four states that rely on the tax.

How this is handled is crucial for Michigan. But it still shouldn't obscure the larger issue. Congress is balancing out hurricane relief with cuts that will make it harder yet for frail citizens to get by and for poor families -- among the chief victims of Katrina -- to work their way out of poverty. It's Washington's own version of a storm surge that overwhelms the nation's poor.

## **U.S. spends itself into mess**

### **Bush urges cuts, GOP lawmakers struggling to make them**

*October 27, 2005*

BY STEVEN THOMMA  
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON -- President George W. Bush met with congressional leaders Wednesday at the Economic Club of Washington and urged them to "push the envelope when it comes to cutting spending."

Yet Bush has never vetoed a spending bill, and it was he who sparked the current fight when he decided to open the federal checkbook to rebuild states ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. That was too much for conservatives, who've watched annual federal spending mushroom from \$1.8 trillion to \$2.5 trillion since Bush led Republicans to power in 2000.

The country's governing party has spent itself into a political mess.

Since Republicans took control of the government five years ago, spending has soared -- driven by mounting costs for the Iraq war, homeland security, rebuilding after Katrina and a pricey new prescription-drug benefit under Medicare, the biggest expansion of an entitlement program since the 1960s.

It's all ballooning the cost and size of the federal government. At the same time, federal revenues have failed to keep up with the costs, saddling the country with steep deficits and rising debt, alarming fiscal conservatives and Wall Street and making America dangerously dependent upon loans from abroad, especially those from Japan and China.

The result is a government harder pressed to afford things it might want, whether it's more tax cuts or shoring up Social Security or programs for people in need. And the pressures are straining the Republican coalition as it heads into a pivotal mid-term election year.

Conservatives threaten retaliation at the polls in next year's congressional elections if the government doesn't rein in spending. Moderate Republicans say proposed spending cuts would punish poor and middle-class people -- and endanger moderates' political survival.

"They're working at cross purposes," said Steven Schier, a political scientist at Carleton College in Minnesota. "These factions are colliding in ways they didn't before."

In the House of Representatives, conservatives led by Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., have reached their limit on spending. Their main target: a one-year delay in next year's scheduled start of the new Medicare drug benefit.

Outside Congress, activists such as David Keene of the American Conservative Union and Pat Toomey of the Club for Growth insist on at least \$50 billion in cuts over 5 years. "That's nothing," Keene said.

Yet Congress is stumbling over the cuts.

One reason is that House Republicans lost their disciplinarian when Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas, stepped down as majority leader while facing criminal charges in a campaign-finance case. At first, DeLay ridiculed calls for spending cuts, saying none were needed. Then, facing backbench



rebellion, he changed course. With his tough management style, DeLay might have been more effective at lining up House Republicans behind one budget plan.

House leaders are struggling to muster support to boost proposed spending cuts from \$35 billion over 5 years to \$50 billion. Among their targets: trimming Medicaid, food stamps and funds for state child-support enforcement. In the Senate, Republicans are straining less as they pursue \$39 billion in spending cuts, nipping many of the same programs.

Voters have yawned at reports of deficits, allowing Republicans to avoid both the tough choices needed to curb spending and political consequences for letting budget deficits erupt on their watch.

Meanwhile, the intra-Republican fight provides grist for a favorite Democratic line of attack that's certain to be amplified in coming months -- that the Republican budget favors rich people over those who are poor.

One leading GOP centrist, Rep. Michael Castle, R-Del., might agree. He said the proposed spending cuts would disproportionately hurt poor and middle-class people. Politically, that would hurt moderates like him.

Proving Castle's point, a Democratic group called the Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities is lobbying GOP moderates to oppose spending cuts. A spokesman said it would pressure 60 House members and 15 senators with public rallies or events in 35 states.